



COVID-19 • UNDERSTANDING HPCON ALPHA

To maintain the readiness and protection of Base personnel and their families, Marine Corps Installations East (MCIEAST) has a basic plan in place to address an outbreak of infectious disease. As part of this plan, Naval Medical Center Camp Lejeune (NMCCCL) works closely with MCIEAST leaders to identify and address any health threat that may appear. In order to organize this effort, the Department of Defense has established a system of Health Protection Conditions (HPCONs). Each level of HPCON (and there are five, labeled Zero, A, B, C and D) is associated with a specific level of health risk. Condition Zero is for normal operations, no specific threat. Condition A applies in cases of a public health alert; we have a specific threat, not yet widespread, but it is time to get ready. We set HPCON B when we see an outbreak in our local area. Condition C means we have a widespread outbreak in our area. Condition D is the worst-case scenario, setting HPCON D means that we are faced with a widespread and very lethal outbreak. As a health emergency matures, we change HPCON to match the prevailing circumstances in our area.



Who declares the level of HPCON?

Per Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6200.03, a Health Protection Condition (HPCON) is set by the military commander in consultation with their Public Health Emergency Officer (PHEO) and the local Military Treatment Facility Commander/Director. MCIEAST is typically in HPCON Zero, which means the installation is running under normal operations as it pertains to health protection. Everyone should be maintaining routine health care precautions such as hand washing, coughing into your sleeve, and regular preparedness activities.

What defines HPCON A?

HPCON A means the installation's population has been alerted to an unusual health risk or disease. In this case, the health risk is the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Installation and medical leadership would then communicate and educate the public on the risk and symptoms of the possible health threat, proper hygiene measures, and when to seek medical care.

What do I need to know during HPCON A?

MCIEAST personnel along with NMCCCL are working diligently to review best practices, hone plans, and stay prepared should there be a need to increase the level of HPCON. It is essential that the base population pay attention to the information being issued about COVID-19 with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- **COVID-19** is a virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China. For most of the American public who are unlikely to be exposed to COVID-19, the immediate health risk is considered LOW per the CDC. While the virus is NOT currently widespread in the United States, the CDC is stressing that the situation is rapidly evolving.
- **How is COVID-19 spread?** The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person; between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) and through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.
- **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?** The following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure: fever, cough, shortness of breath.



What do I need to know during HPCON A? (continued)

- **What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?** Call your health care professional if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop the associated symptoms. **You should call ahead to a health care professional rather than arrive in-person at the Medical Center.** This will help our medical staff take steps to keep others from being infected or exposed.
- **How can I prevent COVID-19?** There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The CDC always recommends the following preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:
 - ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - ✓ Stay home or follow your local sick call procedure when you are sick.
 - ✓ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - ✓ Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

NOTE: The CDC **DOES NOT RECOMMEND** that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. **Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19** to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

How will officials update people if the HPCON level changes?

Any updates involving MCIEAST and NMCCCL will be posted to their respective Facebook pages and installation websites:

- www.facebook.com/camp.lejeune
- www.facebook.com/mcasnewriver
- www.facebook.com/NMCCLejeune
- www.lejeune.marines.mil/COVID-19/
- www.newriver.marines.mil/COVID-19/
- www.med.navy.mil/sites/nhcl/News/Pages/COVID-19.aspx

Please don't speculate or contribute to the rumor mill. Seek out and follow confirmed sources for guidance to include the following:

- **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** is the lead agency for the US Government and the best place to get current information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **NC Division of Public Health** provides statewide updates: <https://publichealth.nc.gov/>
- Outside of the US, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** provides current worldwide updates: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

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